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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S DESPATCHES. Edited by Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Boraston, O. B. E. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

In general, when we think of the great war, we are chiefly impressed by its heroic aspect—by the unspeakable sufferings and the marvellous courage of the Allied soldiers and by the greatness of the cause for which they fought. There is, however, another way of looking at the war, a way scarcely inferior in human interest to the one just mentioned. In Sir Douglas Haig's despatches, victory is outlined as a military achievement. In reading these pages one realizes, perhaps for the first time, the immensity of the co-ordinated effort by which the right was made to prevail; and one sees the victory as something huge, substantial, and majestic—a prodigious human accomplishment. Just as one may be awed and uplifted by gazing upon certain buildings that seem too great to have been built by human hands, so as one takes the measure of the British campaigns in France and Flanders and realizes that these were, after all, but a part of the whole struggle, one is filled with wonder, and one gains a new respect for human nature.

Sir Douglas Haig assumed the Chief Command of the British forces in the West on December 19, 1915. His first despatch, which covers the period from December to May, gives one a lively conception of what were called in this war "local operations." The conflicts around St. Eloi and elsewhere, though they included "no great incident of historic importance," amounted to "a steady, continuous fight, day and night, above ground and below it." The local actions, omitting the more minor raids, numbered more than sixty. Thus, while the French were withstanding the great German offensive against Verdun, the British Army was by no means inactive. Besides harassing the enemy, it carried out with complete success the somewhat risky operation of relieving the French troops on a considerable portion of their defensive front.

The first of July saw the beginning of the Great Wearing-out Battle—the struggle on the Somme. As the "wearing-out" theory has been much discussed and was at one time not a little criticized, Sir Douglas Haig's remarks about this first phase are of especial interest. "Verdun had been relieved; the main German forces had been held on the Western front; and the enemy's strength had been very considerably worn down. Any one of these three results is in itself sufficient to justify the Somme battle. The attainment of all three of them affords ample

compensation for the splendid efforts of our troops and for the sacrifices made by ourselves and our allies. They have brought us a long step forward towards the final victory of the Allied Cause." That by such strategy, victory was brought nearer, despite the intervention of powerful German attacks with consequent loss of territory; is made clear enough by the details of the whole story. There was no time, of course, at which complete success might have been achieved by a single brilliant stroke. In a scientific war, what counted was the ultimate total effect upon the enemy.

As the British advance progressed, four-fifths of the total number of German divisions engaged on the Western front were thrown, one after another, into the battle, some of them twice, and some three times. The enemy's power of resistance was seriously diminished, and it was only by virtue of the great depth of their defences and the frequent reliefs which their resources in men enabled them to effect that the German commanders were able to rally and reorganize their troops after each defeat. These important results were attained, so far as the British forces were concerned, with troops the vast majority of whom had been raised and trained during the war, and many of whom gained in the Somme battle their first experience of war. These soldiers, with the efficient aid of the artillery, assaulted and captured positions "far more formidable in many respects than the most famous fortresses in history."

The moral effect of all this was very great. "The enemy's power has not yet been broken," wrote Sir Douglas on December 23, 1916, "nor is it yet possible to form an estimate of the time the war may last before the objects for which the Allies are fighting have been attained. But the Somme battle has placed beyond doubt the ability of the Allies to gain those objects. The Germany Army is the mainstay of the Central Powers, and a full half of that Army, despite all the advantages of the defensive, supported by the strongest fortifications, suffered defeat on the Somme this year."

No small part of the fruits of the Somme victory was realized during the following winter, when the enemy, despite a season of unusual severity, was forced back by means of methodical assaults to the Hindenburg Line.

The campaigns of 1917 form an important and deeply interesting chapter in the history of the war. Nowhere else is the strategy of attrition more fully illustrated, its methodical effectiveness more convincingly proved, or its arduousness more clearly shown. In brief, a long, uphill fight against superior numbers resulted in a net gain for the Allies—a gain that was an essential factor in the final success, though during the critical period of the spring of 1918, all that had been previously achieved might seem to have been lost. The general attack at Arras was launched on the 9th of April. At the end of six days' fighting the British had rolled their front four miles farther east and had taken possession of all the dominating features that the Commander in Chief considered it desirable to hold before transferring the bulk of his resources to the north. This, however, was not enough. A necessary part of the preparations for the attack in the north was the maintenance of activity on the Arras front sufficient to keep the enemy in doubt as to whether the offensive there would be followed up. Feint

attacks were made, and on at least one occasion dummy men were raised above the trenches by ropes. These measures met with such success that the Germans frequently reported the bloody repulse of extensive British attacks which in fact never took place. Meanwhile, the French delivered their attack upon the Chemin des Dames, achieving all their immediate objects.

The campaign in the north included the attack upon the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge—a unique feature of which was the explosion of nineteen deep mines at the moment of assault—and the third Ypres battle. Though the full results of each success were not always obtained, the fault would appear to lie with the conditions and not with the general staff or with the fighting men. "Time after time," writes Sir Douglas, "the practically beaten enemy was enabled to reorganize and relieve his men and to bring up reinforcements behind the sea of mud which constituted his main protection." Other circumstances made the task of the British and French Armies far harder than had been anticipated. Italy could not be ready in time to co-operate at the beginning of the offensive launched on the Western front, and before that offensive was over, unfortunate developments had greatly weakened the Allied forces in the Italian theatre. Nevertheless, the efforts put forth in the summer of 1917 were, on the narrowest estimate, far from futile. The British Army had participated in an offensive action longer and more successfully sustained than any previous campaign of the war. They were, as usual, outnumbered by their opponents. "In the operations of Arras, Messines, Lens, and Ypres, as many as 131 German divisions were engaged and defeated by less than half that number of British divisions." In the whole campaign, the British took 57,696 prisoners, including 1,290 officers. They captured 393 guns, including 109 heavies, 561 trench mortars, 1,976 machine guns.

It is always to be borne in mind, moreover, that the decisions of the Commander-in-Chief were necessarily influenced by considerations broader than those that are generally called strategic. Right action could be determined upon only after a survey of a vast situation. On the other hand, no extensive sacrifice was made for the broader reasons alone. On the whole, Sir Douglas Haig seems to have been fully justified in writing, near the end of his despatch of December 25, 1917: "Without reckoning the possibilities which have been opened up by our territorial advance in Flanders, and without considering the effect which a less vigorous prosecution of the war might have had in other theatres, we have every reason to be satisfied with the results which have been achieved by the past year's fighting. The addition of strength which the enemy has obtained, or may yet obtain, from events in Russia and Italy has already largely been discounted, and the ultimate destruction of the enemy's field forces has been brought appreciably nearer."

Particular interest attaches to the Cambrai operations, carried on during November and December, 1917, because of the omission of artillery preparation in the opening attack, the completeness with which the enemy was taken by surprise, and, particularly, the employment, upon a large scale, of tanks. This exploit, of course, aroused great hope at the time. If we were somewhat disappointed in the result, it

is well to remember two things: first, that no commander can be omniscient, and second, that it was not expected that the war could be ended by a single bold stroke. Very significant in the light of the detailed story of the attack is Sir Douglas Haig's declaration: "I am of opinion that on the 20th and 21st of November we went very near to a success sufficiently complete to bring the realization of our full programme within our power."

The world will not soon forget the strain of anxiety experienced during the early months of 1918, while the United States was still preparing and the Germans were using to the full the advantage they had gained by the Russian collapse. Of course, the Allied Command had made every effort to be ready for the expected attack. But the shift from an offensive to a defensive position was by no means easy to make. Not only positions but men had to be got ready. The necessity of maintaining front-line positions and of constructing new lines on ground recently captured from the enemy had almost precluded the building up of defensive positions in the rear. Moreover, the men had been trained almost exclusively for attack—a serious difficulty under the conditions of modern warfare. The Germans advanced on the 21st of March in overwhelming force, over a front of fifty-four miles, which was extended on the 28th to sixty-three miles. In all, at least sixty-four divisions, a number considerably exceeding that of the entire British Army in France, took part in the first day's battle. These were opposed by twenty-nine infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, of which nineteen infantry divisions were in line. It soon became evident that the enemy had thrown practically his whole striking force upon this one front. Additional British reserves were therefore hurried to the battle sector as rapidly as possible; but the total number of British divisions used in the second Somme battle at no time exceeded forty-nine. In the Lys battle, prior to the 30th of April, the enemy engaged against the British forces a total of forty-two divisions, of which thirty-three were fresh and nine had fought previously on the Somme. Against these forty-two divisions twenty-five British divisions were employed, of which eight were fresh and seventeen had taken a prominent part in the Somme battle.

Although at the end of April, 1918, the German onrush had been stemmed, the situation was still critical. It was evident that the enemy would make one more attempt to win the war before the arrival of large forces of Americans should make that object forever impossible of attainment. There followed, therefore, a somewhat anxious period of "active defence." It is well to remember that though the Allied line had not been broken, the strain of the defence had approached the breaking point, and that the enemy, before Amiens and Hazebrouck had come within a short distance of strategic points of great importance. His superiority in force was still great enough to enable him to keep the initiative. A complete change, however, was effected by the collapse of the ambitious enemy offensive launched on the 15th of July and by the success of the Allied counter-offensive south of the Aisne. After the brilliant success at Amiens, the British Armies advanced without a check from one victory to another. So great was the demoralization of the enemy that the British, though still numerically inferior to their adversaries, carried all before them. When the

Armistice brought a halt, the German defences were so disorganized that nothing short of a cessation of hostilities could have prevented an advance into Germany.

"The strategic plan of the Allies," writes Sir Douglas Haig, "had been realized with a completeness rarely seen in war."

For those desirous of studying the war as a military event, these despatches furnish information of remarkable clearness and precision. The splendid series of very large and detailed maps which accompanies the volume, not only enables one to follow each detail of every struggle, but appeals to the imagination. Not only cities and rivers and forest and hills are shown, but windmills and farmhouses that for a time had a possible tactical importance, are indicated. Thus, one is able in imagination to place himself upon the actual battlefield.

But most of all the despatches produce the conviction that while the result of the war was by no means a foregone conclusion, the outcome, after the first German drive at Paris had been checked, was never really in doubt, provided only the Allied forces could be supplied with sufficient reserves and with sufficient material. The progress of the war seems at once methodical and fateful. There was a certain margin for mistakes, and some mistakes, doubtless, were made; but the great conclusion must be that the fund of intelligence and skill and courage outside the Central Empires was far more than enough to defeat the Teutonic plans of world dominion. Any lingering idea that the Germans had at any time anything like a monopoly of efficiency is wholly unjustified.

To read other war books and not to read such a book as this would be a mistake. One needs the large view of the war as well as the details of the fighting as seen by the soldier, and if one had to choose between the two views, one would do well to remember that while neither is complete without the other, the larger view is, on the whole, nearer the truth.

CARDINAL MERCIER'S OWN STORY. By his Eminence, D. J. Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines. New York: George H. Doran Company.

On October 17, 1918, when the German Government in Belgium knew that its days were numbered, Baron von der Lancken, in the name of the Governor General and of the Berlin Government, handed to Cardinal Mercier a communication which read in part as follows:

"You are in our estimation the incarnation of occupied Belgium, of which you are the venerated and trusted pastor. For this reason it is to you the Governor General and my government also have commissioned me to come and to announce that when we evacuate your soil we wish to hand over to you unasked and of our own free will the political prisoners serving their time either in Belgium or in Germany, as well as those who have been deported."

Has any other man ever received such a tribute from the irreconcilable opponents of all that he held good and dear?

Cardinal Mercier was in very truth "the soul of Belgian resistance." He was more; for he spoke for all civilization against Kultur. Though zeal for the right and love of humanity were his leading